

Astana Hit By Another Doping Scandal

UCI Continental [Team Astana](#) Kazakh rider Victor Okishev has tested positive for a banned substance. Okishev, who rides for Astana's reserve team, failed a test for anabolic steroids during the Asian championships last May. The 20-year-old from Kazakhstan has been provisionally suspended from competition because of the positive test.

The Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) announced Victor Okishev's sample gave an Adverse Analytical Finding of [Anabolic Androgenic Steroids](#) in a sample collected at the Asian Cycling Championships on 29 May 2014. In a statement, the UCI said the rider has the right to request and attend the analysis of the B sample.

Okishev is the second member of the Astana reserve team to be suspended. Last month, Ilya Davidenok was banned for testing positive for steroids during the Tour de l'Avenir in August. In October this year, brothers [Maxim and Valentin Iglinskiy](#) tested positive for Erythropoietin (EPO), which promotes the count of red blood cells in the body. Valentin failed an anti-doping test on August 11 while Maxim failed the test on August 1. Maxim Iglinskiy was part of the Tour de France line-up of Team Astana that saw the team's Vincenzo Nibali take the overall victory.

Nibali was furious to learn of the doping positives and recently remarked that Astana suffers due to its past, for things that happened in another era. He remarked Vinokourov wasn't even the manager when the team signed Jakob Fuglsang, Fabio Aru, and him, precisely with the objective of changing the image of the team and earning some credibility. The three-time grand tour winner added the sponsors in Kazakhstan are very angry with the Iglinskiy brothers, and he strongly believes that our sport is cleaner today compared to other times in cycling.

The Astana team is run by Alexandre Vinokourov, controversial former rider, who was banned for blood doping in 2007-2009. Vinokourov is presently under investigation for alleged race fixing and bribery.

Team Astana is a member of the Mouvement Pour un Cyclisme Credible (Movement for Credible Cycling or MPCC) that enforces stricter anti-doping rules than the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). In accordance with the MPCC rules, Astana suspended itself for the season-ending Tour of Beijing last month as it had two doping cases in the team in the past 12 months.

On November 6, the team appeared at a UCI hearing in Geneva and a decision on its future for the next season is expected to be out in the next two weeks. The UCI's License Commission is deciding whether or not to refuse Team Astana a license to race next year, or to attach conditions to their license.

Team Astana is facing legal complications from every corner. Recently, Astana rider Lieuwe Westra was caught by police on radar after he was found driving at 189 kilometers per hour (118mph) in the northern part of the Netherlands. Westra finished second in the Paris-Nice

stage race in 2012 riding for Vacansoleil. He joined Astana this year to help Vincenzo Nibali win the Tour de France.